

Glasgow student gives back by helping young scientists in Africa

BY NAN SPOWART

A UNIVERSITY of Glasgow student is using maths and computing skills to train young scientists in Africa to help “push the frontiers of knowledge in science and technology”.

Sofiat Olaosebikan has set up an initiative to teach and empower them with the skills they need to drive innovative research in the Africa.

“There are lots of problems in Africa that need to be solved,” said Olaosebikan, a PhD computing science student at the College of Science and Engineering. “My goal is to raise an army of intellectuals that are going to contribute to the development of Africa.”

“I want to empower young scientists in Africa with the skills to help them bridge the gap between their pre-existing knowledge and real-world scientific problems.”

“I believe that this will help them grow to become innovate thinkers who will push Africa forward

on the frontiers of science and technology. I am a good example of one such African scientist who was empowered by the opportunities I have been given. This initiative was born out of a strong desire to give back to the community by helping other young scientists in Africa and show them what is possible.”

Since 2018, Olaosebikan, with the support of the university, has delivered computer programming workshops in Nigeria and Rwanda through her PWSAfrica project – which stands for Programming Workshop for Scientists in Africa.

She added: “The experience and the impact we have been able to make was worth all the effort to set up this initiative. For some of those that we worked with, they saw where I am right now as something they couldn’t achieve.”

Professor Chris Johnson, head of the School of Computing Science, said: “With all the pressures that exist today in university life to bring in research grants and to teach increasingly larger numbers

of students, it is absolutely fantastic when a few people do something different and challenge preconceptions and go out and do something that I think is important.”

Young scientists Ifeoma Okoh and John Paul took part in the Nigerian workshop in 2018, and this year returned to PSWAfrica as tutors in Rwanda. Okoh said: “We have so much potential in Nigeria but sometimes it is the opportunity to actually show that which is missing.”

Paul, who now has a job at a software company where he hopes to design a new app to help detect breast cancer, added: “Sofiat is awesome and is such an inspiration.”

Olaosebikan completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria before being accepted for a fully funded masters programme at the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences (AIMS). In 2016, she moved to Glasgow after being accepted for a PhD at the University’s School of Computing Science.

“Throughout my education in



Sofiat Olaosebikan believes opportunities in the science and technology sector can help empower young Africans

Ibadan, I lacked access to learn programming because there were no opportunities available to me,” she said. “It is that lack of access to programming education in Africa that gave me the idea to start PWSAfrica. We are proud of what we’ve achieved so far and we’re excited about making even more impact.”

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